

When Pierre Met Adolf? The Olympic Games in the Age of Technical Reproduction

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*In 1936 Jesse Owens won the 100 meters at
the Berlin Olympics against a ... Zeppelin!*
The Simpsons

1. Introduction

‘A universe filled with history and emotion.’¹ As this welcome awaiting virtual visitors at its museum in Lausanne suggests, the Olympic movement hardly suffers from an inferiority complex. Academics concur. ‘The Olympics offer a platform to all nations, and most of all to small nations, of the world that is unrivalled by any other cultural or political body, even the United Nations’.² ‘There is no other event to match the drama, spectacle and pageantry of the Games or the moments of elation when the world unites to cheer on the victorious Olympians’.³ Or put simply: the Games are ‘one of the world’s greatest institutions’.⁴ Certainly many of the host cities and their national governments, without whose help the sporting mega-event is no longer possible, would attest to this judgement. Serially and variously, the Games have asserted national ideologies of contrasting hues (Los Angeles 1932 – Berlin 1936 – London 1948; Moscow 1980 – Los Angeles 1984 / Seoul 1988), symbolically heralded the rehabilitation of defeated nations (Rome 1960, Tokyo 1964, Munich 1972),⁵ facilitated the negation of harmful stereotypes (Mexico 1968, Barcelona 1992, Sydney 2000, possibly Athens 2004), provided grist to the mill of local contestation (Barcelona 1992),⁶ and given the successful financial impulse to urban regeneration (Montreal 1976 is the only significant post-war exception). Little wonder, then, that

¹ http://www.olympic.org/uk/passion/museum/home_uk.asp (retrieved 1 February 2005).

² Tomlinson and Young (2005: 2-3).

³ Schaeffer and Smith (2004: 2).

⁴ D.C. Young (1984: ix).

⁵ On Tokyo, see Tagsold (2002).

⁶ On the complex relationship between the Spanish government and Catalan Barcelona during the preparation for the 1992 Games, see Hargreaves (2000).

millions of Australians took to the streets in celebration when Sydney won the bid to host the millennium Games, prime minister Paul Keating exclaiming: 'We're in the swim with the big boys'.⁷ If not quite universal, the Olympics are an event of major global significance.

In the introduction to our forthcoming edited collection of Olympics and World Cup cases studies, Alan Tomlinson and I operate with the following working definition of the global sport spectacle: 'an event that has come to involve the majority of the nations of the world, that is transmitted globally, that foregrounds the sculptured and commodified body and orchestrates a physical display of the body politic, and that attracts large and regular followings of on-site spectators for the live contest or event'.⁸ In that volume, our contributors concentrate primarily on the political ramifications of events after 1945, when the two competitions in question are moving into and achieving a phase of global reach. In this paper, I would like to concentrate in more detail on how, when and why this success came about.

The various bunchings in Table 1 (attached) demonstrate – with the simplistic clarity that statistics often afford – that the various component elements of our definition provide different possible answers to this question. From a medial perspective, it would be easy to argue that the true litmus test was the event's suitability for mass coverage and transmission around the globe and its organisers' ability to adapt to and learn the rules of that economy. From a political perspective, it would be hard to conceive of the Games' continued growth in the popular consciousness and memory without the Soviets decision to join in the 1950s – a decision that delivered the Games the unquestioned premier status of which the already successful Spartakiads and Workers Olympics in the 1920s and 1930s might have been able to rob it had the Soviets been differently minded.⁹ (The major boycott years of 1980 and 1984 show the importance of participation for legitimization.) Viewed through an economic lens, one could say that without huge corporate sponsorship, the Games would have collapsed. Indeed, it is widely held that the economic attraction of potential new markets played a significant role in the awarding of the 2008 Games to Beijing. All of this is true, to a point. But we could and should look at the matter from another angle. Television wanted into the Games. The Soviets wanted into the Games. And the sponsors wanted into the Games. The reason for this is simple: the Games were already big before the 'big boys' arrived. They had established themselves by the mid 1920s and in 1932 and 1936 – as several peaks in Table 1 show – took a quantum leap forward.

The biography of the Games' modern founder, Baron Pierre de Coubertin (born 1863), has been thoroughly and reputedly pieced together,¹⁰ and need not therefore detain us. His Olympic ideals did not evolve in a vacuum. Comparing the Olympic movement with contemporary and analogous idealistic international movements such

⁷ Schaeffer and Smith (2000: 2).

⁸ Tomlinson and Young (2005, forthcoming).

⁹ Worker's Olympics had taken place in Frankfurt (1925), Vienna (1931), and were cancelled at the last moment in Barcelona (1936) due to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Soviet Games took place in Moscow in the Olympic years 1928 and 1932. For an explanation of the Soviet's decision, see the excellent Harvard dissertation of Barbara Keys (2001).

¹⁰ In particular, see MacAloon (1981); Mandell (1976); Hall (1992); Weber (1970); D.C. Young (1987, 1996).

as the Scouting (founded 1908), Esperanto (1887) and the Red Cross (1863), John Hoberman, in his influential essay ‘Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism’, uncovers ‘a core repertory of behaviours that are common to all of them’:¹¹

a rhetoric of universal membership, a Eurocentric orientation that limits universal participation, an insistence on political neutrality, the empowering role of wealth, social prominence and aristocratic affiliations, a professed interest in peacemaking or pacifism, a complex and problematic relationship between national and international loyalties, the emergence of a (marginalized) ‘citizen-of-the-world’ style radical supernationalism, [...] a philosophy of creative international action amounting to a way of life for those possessing the necessary dedication and financial independence to pursue it.

Hoberman’s socio-political panorama is well painted, but underplays the effects of the Olympic movement’s universal drive. Although the IOC and participation in its Games were dominated at first by Europe and the US, as can be gleaned from Table 2 (attached), its theoretical horizons were beginning to reach terra firma even before the First World War. By the time of only the second mature Olympics in 1912 (if one discounts the small inaugural event and the two Expo appendages in 1900 and 1904), the event was attracting participation from South America, the Arab world, Asia (each with IOC members and athletes) and South Africa (athletes only). In the 1920s and 1930s, the initial Eurocentric orientation of the Games was slowly but surely opening out. Coubertin and Baillet-Latour toured South America in the 1920s to proselytise Olympic ideals, and by the mid 1920s, the percentage of European nobility on the IOC had sunk to 41 percent (in 1908 it had been 68 percent).¹² In 1923, the *west* coast of the America, despite worries about the willingness of athletes to travel the distance was awarded the 1932 Games, whence Japanese participants were waved off at the docks with cries of ‘see you in Tokyo in 1940’.¹³ In 1932 the People’s Republic of China, which had its first IOC member elected in 1922, was represented – although, almost only symbolically, by a sole competing athlete.

The 1936 Games in Berlin form a lynchpin in Hoberman’s exploration of Olympic internationalism. For Hoberman, Berlin represents a nadir in Olympic history. He is certainly not alone in this view, as two recent, diverse publications show. Schaeffer and Smith’s introduction to the ‘Olympics at the Millennium’ provides us with a telling Freudian slip when it erroneously recalls ‘Jessie Owens rising to the winner’s platform in Leni Riefenstahl’s documentary on the 1936 Berlin games, “Triumph of the Will”’ as one of those images that are ‘powerfully etched on our collective memories’.¹⁴ And in the popularising academic account of the ancient Games published by Oxford University Press in the run-up to Athens 2004, Cambridge Classicist Nigel Spivey softens his warts-and-all narrative by making cheap capital out of Berlin’s ‘war with the shooting’.¹⁵ Hoberman, however, is more thorough and

¹¹ Hoberman (1996: 3, 9-10).

¹² Krüger (1980: 529, 551).

¹³ Dyreson (1995: 36-7).

¹⁴ Schaeffer and Smith (2000: 3).

¹⁵ Spivey (2004) admits that the peace of present day Olympia – its ‘[o]ak and olive, cypress and citrus’, ‘marvellous seclusion and natural tranquillity’, ‘landscape that settles the soul’ – is an illusion. His book goes on to point out the fallacy of the notion that sport and politics are intrinsically separate, by following the political history of Olympia from 776 BC to the official closure of the site *c.* AD 393 (in chapter 5); it shows also, for instance, that the universalist rhetoric of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries masked the fact that in the ancient games it was not in fact the taking part that mattered (a phrase, incidently, made public by de Coubertin for the first time at a ball at the Grafton Galleries and a dinner at the Holburn Restaurant during the London Olympics 1908), but, and often at

ambitious with his analysis of 1936, which he sees both as an endpoint of a co-option of the Olympic movement by ‘the Nazis and their French and German sympathizers during the 1930s’ – a development ‘made possible in part by an ideological compatibility between the IOC elite and the Nazis based on a shared ideal of aristocratic manhood and the value system that derived from their glorification of the physically perfect male as the ideal human being’¹⁶ – and just one more (albeit significant) example of the IOC’s systemic right-wing leanings.

Hoberman’s argument is seductive, but in many points suggestive rather than substantive, and certainly open to debate on individual issues, for which there is no space here.¹⁷ In general, however, my unease rests with a privileging of politics over sport.¹⁸ In Hobermann’s analysis, sport tags along behind socio-political developments and seeks to catch up and exploit them for its own purposes. Thus: ‘the Olympic movement achieved its popularity in part because it expressed certain tastes and impulses among the generation of European youth who came of age during and after the Great War.’ But to reach a full understanding of how the Olympics developed in the inter-war period, we need to grasp how, in various ways, sport in general was becoming a central part of European and American life. Put simply, the Olympic movement was popular because sport was popular. The next sections of this paper – the latter with detailed reference to the Los Angeles and Berlin Olympics – will explore the reasons for this growing popularity with reference to the essential constitutive contexts in which sport was located in the vital period of its crystallization as a modern cultural form: the mega-event and spectacle; popularisation and internationalisation; politicisation; technologization. Hoberman wishes to depart from the traditional emphasis on 1936 as an ‘isolated lapse on the part of the IOC, in order to place it in the larger political-historical context where it belongs’, in order to ‘rid the Olympic movement of its “halo effect”’.¹⁹ I too will argue that the Games were not a lapse, but with a very different emphasis. Berlin –

all costs, the winning – the names of victors becoming a mode of chronology in the Greek and Roman world; he shows up the fallacy of the Olympic peace – there was in fact no complete cessation of war, as often believed and instrumentalized in the modern era, simply the guarantee of safe passage for competitors travelling to the games. Yet, the main thrust of his book is to demonstrate that despite their brutality, the ancient Games were ‘profoundly civilized’ and a “war minus the shooting” (2004: xx and ch. 1). It is in this context that Spivey presents the 1936 Olympics, the only Games – apart from a cursory sketch of Athens 1896 – that he mentions in his brief concluding chapter on the modern era. There is an obvious thematic link – the nineteenth-century excavation of Olympia (the underpinning of his ch. 6) segueing into a description of Hitler’s funding provision for its continuation. But more importantly, 1936 is mobilized to bring the deep structure of Spivey’s study once more to the surface. Unlike ancient Olympia, Olympics Hitler-style necessitate going to ‘war – with the shooting’ (2004: 248). This concluding sentence of the final chapter is then coda-ed with an epilogue that, relativizing the myth-breaking tone of the study as a whole, seems to elevate the ancient games away from politics (‘Sport – even serious sport – is *fun*’, 250) and take the reader back to the opening lines of the work: Olympia ‘is a deeply peaceful place; where, if we strive, it is to show ourselves at our best’ (251). In this work, therefore, in a move contrary to Hitler’s own appropriation of German Hellenism, Berlin 1936 functions as a foil for the redemption of the finer values of the ancient world.

¹⁶ Hoberman (1996: 17).

¹⁷ For instance: there is no acknowledgement of the role of the Eastern block in the movement’s development; there is no recognition of the long tradition of ‘chivalry’ in sports vocabulary; the relationship between sport and militarization is too monodirectional; there is little evidence for the Olympics as a continuation of the war-time male bonding experience.

¹⁸ Booth (2004: 17-18) offers a different critique of Hobermann.

¹⁹ Hoberman (1996: 17, 3).

and Los Angeles – were both the culmination of a long process of maturation and the making of the modern quadrennial spectacle.

2. Essential constitutive contexts

a. Popularisation and Internationalisation

Modern sports were a British invention. From the early part of the nineteenth century, physical exercise in Western Europe was dominated by gymnastics, with countries such as Germany and Sweden developing their own particular national varieties. In the late nineteenth century, sport began a phase of natural spread, as individuals, rather than governmental cultural institutions, took their favourite games with them when they moved abroad. The considerable economic reach of British industry was therefore a key carrier of infectious ludic enthusiasm, which even in the years preceding 1914 was described in conservative continental parlance as ‘the English disease’. The naturalness of the spread can be witnessed in Britain’s later reluctance to become involved in the drive for the institutionalisation of international sporting bodies, which developed on the whole from the needs and desires of continental neophytes.

Sport, an activity that requires at least two and often a few dozen people, is *per definitionem* a social phenomenon, and as such can take up a variety of locations within a nation’s socio-political and cultural landscape. In Germany, for instance, the arrival of modern sport in the years between the foundation of the Reich in 1871 and the First World War pitted two different forms of citizenship against each other: the new-comer offering the industrial age’s principle of competition as an alternative to the incumbent’s collective spirit mentality and top-down institutional structures. The innate modernity of the import found a natural home in burgeoning urban centres, where it offered alternative loci of sociability and eventual mobility for the new service professions such as engineering, sales, and journalism. As Christiane Eisenberg has shown, before 1914 modern sport, in Germany at least, contributed to the evolution of a new middle class.²⁰

Across Europe, the First World War was a major turning point in the history of sport. The need to stave off boredom and maintain levels of fitness in the ranks caused many officers to introduce it at the front, whence it returned as an important phenomenon in civilian life. Throughout the Western world, sport was promoted by governments and educators for its health and fitness benefits. In Germany, for instance, sports clubs functioned as a means by which the government got round the Versailles Treaty’s ban on re-militarization. The first Sports University in the world (the Deutsche Hochschule für Leibesübungen) was set up in Berlin in 1920; and Prussian universities introduced sports institutes from 1925. But it also formed a welcome and passionately pursued element of the new interwar mass culture, which was,

²⁰ Eisenberg (1999: 215-312).

amongst other things, facilitated and necessitated by increased leisure time for the working man. Soccer, boxing and athletics were the major attractions. The numbers of players registered with the German Football Association (DFB) soared from around 190,000 in 1914 to 470,000 in 1920 and 750,000 in 1921.²¹ Whilst 6,000 had watched the final of the last German soccer championship before the war, six times that figure turned out to witness the first final of the resumed championship in 1920 between Nuremberg and SpVgg Fürth, a match for which the German railroads had to lay on special trains for the first time.²² Large stadiums were built in Cologne, Munich (both 1924), Frankfurt, Düsseldorf (both 1925) and Nuremberg (1928). Track and field, as the famous post-war journalist Sebastian Haffner wrote in his autobiography, found large numbers of obsessive, record-memorizing followers in the Weimar Republic. Boxing, a sport – despite its many British trainers in Germany – associated primarily with the US and its chic modernity, became part of high culture, as the new subtitle of the arts journal ‘Der Querschnitt’ – ‘Magazin für Kunst, Literatur und Boxsport’ – clearly shows.

A special issue of ‘Der Querschnitt’ in 1932 entitled ‘Fug und Unfug des Sports’ (‘The Justification for and Nonsense of Sport’) gives a sense and flavour of sport’s position in interwar society. Whilst de Coubertin might not have taken kindly to the satirical tone of the editorial, which depicted sport as the ‘world religion of the twentieth century’ in which ‘the symbol of the cross’ had been replaced by the ball, he would have felt little unease at the 100 page spread eulogizing the aesthetic beauty of the sporting body.²³ Sport therefore had mass appeal across a wide social range. It was this that ensured its survival and – as Eisenberg argues – its immediate rude health when the National Socialists came to power. The Nazis had taken no official position on the Turnen vs. Sport debates before coming to power, although the *Völkischer Beobachter* in 1929 pushed the idea of a native German physical culture over internationalism and generally opposed participation in and the hosting of the Olympic Games. As Alkemeyer points out, however, National Socialism from 1933 onwards was a syncretism of all things popular.²⁴ Sport was so obviously more in keeping with the modern, urban, popular mood than Turnen that it was taken under the protective arm of the regime in one fell swoop in 1933 and centralized on the Italian model.²⁵ Mass Turnen displays continued, but Turnen was now institutionally incorporated into sport.

Had it not been for the war, the 1916 Games would have been held in Berlin, in a purpose built stadium with a capacity of 32,000. The Organising Committee for the 1936 Games, still under Carl Diem, planned to renovate the old stadium until Hitler stepped in with his grand gesture of national representation. But Hitler’s stadium – one that he famously found much ludicrously insulting for his own purposes – was very much in keeping with his country’s and Europe’s sporting Zeitgeist. As the 1936 Official Report notes: ‘After the War, the sport movement grew rapidly. German youth sought in sport activity an outlet for the energy which had previously been absorbed by army life. It was soon evident that stadium was not large enough for an

²¹ Eisenberg (1993) warns about the precision of these figures, but they nonetheless give some indication of the proportions of growth.

²² Hesse-Lichtenberger (2002: 53).

²³ Eggers (2001: 34).

²⁴ Alkemeyer (1996: 12, 237, 260-1).

²⁵ Krüger (1986).

Olympic Festival, either from a technical or capacity standpoint. *It was not even large enough for the daily demands placed upon it or for the activities of the German Institute for Physical Education, founded in 1920.*²⁶

Sport's popularization was paralleled by its internationalisation. Outside Britain, it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that matches took place between national teams. Even after the First World War, the soccer World Cup was first conceived as an inter-club rather than inter-national competition. As sport put down roots, international organizations were gradually founded to oversee their regulation and promote contact. Between 1890 and 1914, 14 were in place.²⁷ Before 1914, these sports federations were generally weak, with the IOC dominating and offering de facto world championships. After the war, however, the international federations gained in strength, developing a degree of autonomy and status in their own right vis-à-vis their national organisations and creating not just a level playing field via regulation and standardization, but also the basic conditions for international comparability on which universalistic ideals could thrive. As Keys notes, by the 1930s, sports still had local inflections, 'but their structure and functions were constrained by a universal idiom, whose grammar would have been understood by any of the growing numbers of fans who clamoured for seats'.²⁸ It would be wrong to overestimate the proficiency of the federations. The 1936 organisers found, for instance, that 'the critical examination of these regulations [i.e. of the individual disciplines] by the International Sporting Federations required a long time. This is explained by the fact that most of the International Sporting Federations ha[d] no office staff of their own but ha[d] honorary officers and only me[t] once, or at most twice a year.'²⁹ Nonetheless, in the interwar period, the control, regulation and recording of standards and the gradual provision of frameworks for more regular international competition laid the foundations for the serious exploitation of sport for political purposes in a domain of massed popular appeal: 'like steel output or export of manufactures, [...] performance in international competitions produced a number that, in the view of many observers, correlated with national strength.'³⁰

The Olympics' appeal in the 1920s chimes with Markovits and Hellerman's analysis of the establishment of individual sports as set fixtures within a nation's or continent's sports space. Sports that achieve a foothold in the crucial decades of industrial proliferation and the establishment of modern mass societies were often extremely difficult to dislodge or replace. 'Tellingly, the window of arranging the sport spaces of virtually all industrial democracies roughly occurs in that crucial period between 1870 and 1930. [...] The continually reinforcing feedback of escalating success provide them a cultural and institutional presence that render them virtually invincible'.³¹ Since the Olympics functioned as a world championship for most sports disciplines, including soccer, the most popular Western of all, until its departure in 1930 – it is not surprising that they should reach a sustainable steady state around the same time as their component parts. If we view the 349,689 total ticket sales for the Antwerp Games in 1920 as a post-war hangover rather than a continuation of pre-war

²⁶ Official Report (1936, vol. 1: 130), emphasis mine.

²⁷ Keys (2001: 50).

²⁸ Keys (2001: 2).

²⁹ Official Report (1936, vol. 1: 254-5).

³⁰ Keys (2001: 34).

³¹ Markovits and Hellermann (2001: 15).

trends (the host monarch commented on visiting the event: ‘All this is rather nice, but it certainly lacks people’),³² the increased popularity of the Olympics in the 1920s falls perfectly in line with what we might expect in the final decade of modern sport’s fermentation. In total, Paris and Amsterdam attracted roughly the equivalent of six times the number of spectators that packed Wembley stadium for the English FA Cup Finals in the 1920s, at the time the largest draw in the soccer world. Viewed purely subjectively, this seems a healthy figure. Post-1945 figures settle and grow from around twice that number (1948-1960: 1,247,283 – 1,436,091), a figure achieved and surpassed in the last two Games before the Second World War.

b. Politicisation of sport

It is a truism that sport has always been political. The Anglo-American world, where modern sport developed first and without socio-political hindrance from indigenous alternatives, led the way. In Britain, sport was a vehicle for the physical training and moral character-building of elites who would rule an Empire with their muscular Christianity. In the US, it provided, in a vital initial phase, an alternative to war.

In the fifty years from around 1870, many proposed sport as a vehicle for the rebuilding of community and strong republican values in a nation that had been deeply shaken by the Civil war and was having to come to terms with the social anxiety caused by the onset of modernity. In what Mark Dyreson terms the ‘sporting republic’, sport was conceived and propagated by a critical mass of thinkers as a technology that ‘would bring all war’s positive benefits [...] robust vitality, civic engagement, grand purpose, commitment to high ideals, energetic nationalism, abundant and exciting life’, and that could even be seen as a ‘moral equivalent for war’.³³ Sport was treated therefore with the utmost seriousness. The English journalist Montague Shearman accompanied the joint Oxford and Cambridge track and field team to the inaugural match with Harvard and Yale in the US, and reported extensively on his findings in ‘The Badmington Magazine’: ‘How is it that, with much fewer men to select from, the Americans achieve such superlative results? [...] These results are the product of a system – a system which is more or less universal throughout the country [...]. The system is that the club or college, as soon as it has selected its representatives in any sport, trains and maintains them entirely at the club’s expense, and providing them at the club’s charge, not only with board and lodging, but with well-paid and competent instructors, who teach them the sport [...] in a thorough and scientific manner. [...] Englishmen will be very foolish if they neglect the lesson which has been taught them by America [...]. Sport is an amusement and not a business: but what is worth doing is worth doing well.’³⁴ Such dedication was evident in the US’s success in the Olympics, which – due to the country’s exceptional privileging of baseball, basketball and football – was its prime arena of international superiority. From the modern Games’ inception, the US regularly had the largest team and biggest medal haul every four years. Before the First World War, therefore, the US had advanced to the leading sports nation in the world. It was natural for Diem to undertake a long journey to the US to study their facilities and techniques. And it is not surprising that in the Weimar Republic sports

³² Guttman (1992: 39)

³³ Dyreson (1998: 5-6).

³⁴ M. Shearman: ‘International Athletics’, *The Badmington Magazine* 1 (1895: 387, 389).

and Americanisation were combined in a discourse that argued the case for democracy and modernisation.³⁵

The First World War changed attitudes to sport in the US as it did in Europe. As Dyreson points out, ‘the idea of sport as a regenerator of individual vigor continued to grow, but the concept of sport as a rejuvenator of the polity increasingly lost favour’.³⁶ At the same time as sport was becoming an American way of life in the 1920s – with huge audiences, media coverage, and the emergence of sporting celebrities –, and most schools, by the 1930s, were incorporating sports over gymnastics and physical training into their programmes as a preferred method of military preparation, sport was largely abandoned by serious thinkers. The scale of the war that rendered the sporting metonymy exceptionally thin, the commodification of sport, and the maturation of sport into a taken-for-granted second phase all contributed to its theoretical wasting.³⁷ The staying power of Olympic discourse, however, aligned with the willingness of some of its US apologists to represent it undeterred, meant that the positive aspects of sport retained a certain cultural stickiness in the 1920s. Unlike the case of fascist Italy and from 1933 Germany, the US government did not dictate sporting politics. There was little government input, for instance, at Los Angeles 1932: no financial backing was provided, and President Hoover, certainly with the Depression in mind and an eye to the upcoming election, did not grace the Games with his presence, as protocol required. It was left to American sports functionaries and ideologues to continue ploughing their furrow for the spread of American democracy via sport. Despite the Depression, foreign tours increased markedly in the 1930s.

Nonetheless, the 1932 Games themselves – which, as Carl Diem noted, survived due to their being awarded, planned, and well financed before the world plunged into financial crisis at the end of the 1920s – provided the American media with the opportunity to talk-up their country’s innate robustness, athletic superiority and moral fibre. In a climate where national baseball attendances had halved in the space of just a few years, the Olympics mobilized enough interest to turn in a profit. As Dyreson, in a further study, shows: ‘The Olympics provided a community of discourse where Americans could tell stories about themselves to their fellow citizens and global audiences’.³⁸ Jim Thorpe, the disrobed double track and field champion from Stockholm announced: ‘We’ll show the world what a marvellous thing the Olympics are – when staged by Americans’; others claimed that the Games ‘typified the ambitions of Los Angeles to lead the civic procession to a bright fresh start’; and still others, buoyed by the great success of the US team, which won more medals than the next four teams put together, and over a third of the total available, exclaimed: ‘who won the Olympics? The answer comes echoing back from the hills like a clap of thunder. The United States. Use any mathematics known to human mind, and you can arrive at only one conclusion.’ The mood of triumphant nationalism witnessed in Berlin four years later might have satisfied the National Socialist’s Ministry of Propaganda, but it was not their invention. The war-mongering vitriol emerging from *both* sides of the Atlantic when Joe Louis fought and defeated the German World Heavyweight Champion Max Schmeling in 1938 is further proof of this.

³⁵ Becker (1993).

³⁶ Dyreson (1998: 202).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Dyreson (1995: 23), from whom the following quotations are taken.

In Germany sport had followed a different path. It had been immediately drawn into political networks in Germany, not just because of its philosophical antagonism towards Turnen, but also due to the volatile social climate of the new Reich. Politicians as well as military and civil authorities recognised sport's potential and it was not long before its ruling bodies were integrated into a 'network of corporate interweaving between sports organisations, civil and military bureaucracies and politically right-leaning interest groups'.³⁹ Sports bodies, via personal and institutional links, could therefore not avoid becoming a potent voice for 'total war', as can be evidenced in the truce between Turnen and sport in the run-up to the cancelled 1916 Berlin Olympics. Yet, as Eisenberg argues, sports functionaries, and at the head of them Carl Diem in particular, won victories for sport *per se* in terms of resources and social recognition. After the masses' sporting socialization at the front and the need for Germany to keep itself militarily fit via sport in the shadow of the Versailles Treaty, the relationship between sport and the military in the Weimar Republic was as complex – at once collaborative and self-interested – as before the war. As Eisenberg observes in one of her most striking conclusions, the Nazi's open re-arming and centralization of sport at the beginning of their rule created the first real degree of independence for sport.

On the eve of the National Socialist's seizure of power, however, the approaching Los Angeles Games provided further opportunity for sports-political trench warfare in Germany. Edmund Neuendorff, head of the German Turner and later NS party member was vehemently opposed to German participation, arguing both that the raising of money for such purposes would be felt at home to be a 'punch in the stomachs of the starving' and that the Allies would claim the Germans were obviously well off if they could support such 'luxury games'.⁴⁰ Diem replied that nationalistic sentiment demanded attendance because sport was precisely the one domain in which Germany 'had equal rights': 'they would watch on silently but with pleasure at Germany excluding itself from the moral alliance of the nations'.⁴¹ Economically too, participation in Los Angeles would ensure a good reciprocity and financial benefits when the Games come to Berlin: 'For their modest means and proportions, these Olympic expeditions offer propaganda for all things German in a way that simply could not be bettered'.⁴² Despite the relatively poor German performance (they slipped from second position in 1928 to 5th), events at the Games appear to support Diem's argument. As well as being placed centre stage at their close as protocol demands for the hosts of the following Games, Germany was singled out immediately prior to the final ceremony: 100,000 people rose to their feet as the German flag was raised to the sound of the national anthem and Diem was presented with a special honour in recognition of the Schmidt brothers' ascent to the top of the Matterhorn. Just two weeks earlier, on the day of the opening ceremony, the National Socialists had become the strongest party in the German parliament. Their seizure of power five months later heralded a significant increase in international sports contact (from around 20 a year through the 1920s to sixty from 1933 to 1939), when the regime

³⁹ Eisenberg (1999: 436).

⁴⁰ Bauer (1998: 46).

⁴¹ Bauer (1998: 5).

⁴² Bauer (1998: 99).

sought to convince opinion abroad both of its peaceful nature and superiority.⁴³ After the 1936 Games, a twin-track approach opened up: whilst international sport was pursued, attempts were made to gain increased control of international federations.⁴⁴ Diem's trip to Lausanne during the war to bring the IOC's vital documentation to Berlin is a logical extension of this policy.

These very brief sketches of sport's cultural coordinates in the two nations that hosted the Olympics' major Games in the 1930s show that sport becomes politicised for different reasons and at different rates. But they also demonstrate that the Olympics neither caused the politicisation of sport (although they were often a vehicle for its expression), nor – as often too readily assumed – were mugged and manipulated in Berlin by a previously unknown assailant. Since modern sport's arrival on the continent in the late nineteenth century, war, mass popularity, maturation, and internationalisation all contributed to an inevitable increase in its political dimensions.

This runs contrary, of course, to the discourse of Olympism, which has always maintained a fundamental political disinterestedness. However, as Foucault observed in 'The Archaeology of Knowledge', discourse is made up of more than words and rhetoric:

'The analysis of statements [...] is a historical analysis, but one that avoids all interpretation: it does not question things said as to what they are hiding, what they were 'really' saying, in spite of themselves, the unspoken element they contain, the proliferation of thoughts, images, or fantasies that inhabit them; but, on the contrary, it questions them as to their mode of existence [...] there is no such thing as a latent statement. [...] To describe statements, to describe the enunciative function of which they are the bearers, to analyse the conditions in which this function operates, to cover the different domains that this function presupposes and the way in which those domains are articulated, is to undertake to uncover what might be called the discursive formation.'⁴⁵

The Games' claim to be un-political is a discursive tactic that has ensured their survival.⁴⁶ In his analysis of the structures through which the INGOs gain and

⁴³ See Keys (2001: 149-153).

⁴⁴ See Teichler (1991).

⁴⁵ Foucault (1989: 109, 116)

⁴⁶ The fact that the verbal formulation of Olympic principles has always been subsidiary to their symbolic overlay is an important factor in this. As Lenk (1964) has convincingly shown, Olympism is overflowing with concepts and values that lack a rigorous and unambiguous framework. Coubertin's writings are extensive, but incoherent and susceptible of contradictory interpretations. The reason for this was de Coubertin's desire not simply to present and propagate abstract ideas, but to generate feelings, fantasies and experiences that would enhance individual and collective worldviews through the act of participation. As one of his Olympic Letters (1918) shows, this was an explicit tactic – 'Do you think a democracy could really normally exist if it only had legal texts and calls to vote to hold its citizens together' (1966: 67) –, and one very much in keeping with contemporary notions of the non-verbal, pre-rational functioning of mass psychology (Alkemeyer 1996: 150). Symbols, ritual and ceremony were therefore vital in order to provide the necessary added value to a series of what would otherwise have been mere world championships. In this respect, it is telling that the Olympic Charta articulates the aims and objectives only vaguely, but pays a great deal of attention to the precise detail of its ceremonial life (Alkemeyer 1996: 46-8, 213). The Games themselves are therefore the primary focus and expression of Olympism. Since their inauguration in 1896, each quadrennial manifestation has been subject to a strict written protocol controlled by the IOC. It is clear that the looseness of Olympism verbal formulation and its reliance on more open forms of visual representation have given enough room for the semantic manoeuvre that has ensured its long survival (Lenk 1982). A counter example proves this point. From the beginning, the definition of amateurism and the practical policing

legitimise world authority, John Boli observes that ‘rational voluntarism is universalistic because it is based on concepts of universal human rights, obligations and capacities’ and for that reason ‘the maximum inclusiveness endows the greatest authority on any particular world body’.⁴⁷ That is why it was in fact discursively not contradictory for de Coubertin, in an interview after the 1936 Games to have claimed: ‘What’s the difference between propaganda for tourism – like in the Los Angeles Olympics of 1932 – or for a political regime? The most important thing is that the Olympic movement made a successful step forward.’⁴⁸ Coubertin would no doubt have approved of Brundage’s reaction to Czech Olympic hero, Emile Zatopek’s plea in 1968 to bar the Soviets from the Mexico Games after their invasion of his country: ‘If participation in sport is to be stopped every time the politicians violate the laws of humanity, there will never be any international contests’.⁴⁹

Moreover, and fundamentally, the Games need(ed) political backing in order to facilitate their spread. This is witnessed in the Charta: whilst, it is maintained, the Games are awarded to a city, the relevant nation’s government must pledge responsibility on submission of the bid and its head of state is expected to undertake patronage of the event. This apparent ‘contradiction’ no longer causes any problems in Olympic realpolitik, as London’s bid for the 2012 Games clearly demonstrates: ‘There’s no greater prize *for any city* than winning the honour of hosting the Games. They are a defining moment *for a nation* and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.’⁵⁰ From 1936 onwards, governments have poured increasingly vast sums of money into the Games. But the more political agencies have enabled Olympic discourse, the harder it has become for that discourse to maintain its apolitical creed. This is because of the complex and subtle relationship between discourse, power and resistance, as explored by Foucault in ‘The Will to Knowledge’, the first volume of ‘The History of Sexuality’:

‘Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.’⁵¹

It is not insignificant that the twenty years of Brundage’s tenure as IOC President (1952-1972), the period in which, after Berlin, governments began investing heavily in the Games, were ‘characterized by a constant struggle to defend Olympic ideals against politics (i.e., governmental interference)’.⁵² As Brundage himself noted in his controversial speech at the memorial service held for the eleven murdered Israeli athletes in Munich 1972: ‘in this imperfect world, the greater and more important the Olympic Games become, the more they are open to commercial, political and now

of its implementation was so riddled with contradiction that it became akin to the cat and mouse game of cunning tax evasion.

⁴⁷ Boli (1999: 282).

⁴⁸ Cited in Krüger (1999 and 2004: 37). The 1936 Official Report (1936: 4, 50): makes exactly this point.

⁴⁹ Guttman (1992:129), who himself adds: ‘How could a humane and peaceful world be a precondition for the games that were meant to contribute to the creation of a humane and peaceful world?’

⁵⁰ www.london2012.org/en (retrieved 25 February 2005), emphasis mine.

⁵¹ Foucault (1978: 101).

⁵² Guttman (1992: 84).

criminal pressure'. Given Olympism's discursive formation, it could not have been otherwise. It is not surprising that the next significant growth in Olympic history after Brundage's retirement comes in the pairing of Moscow and Los Angeles in 1980 and 1984 (see Table 1), when politics, despite massive boycotts, once again played a huge role in Olympic growth.

c. Spectacle and mega-events

In political and sporting terms, Los Angeles 1932 and Berlin 1936 were the Moscow and Los Angeles of their time. But they were also the culmination of one further development of the interwar years: the advent of the sporting mega-event. Mega-events, as defined by Maurice Roche in his extensive comparative study, are large-scale 'events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance', and 'form a dense social eco-system and social calendar of public culture [...] in modern societies'.⁵³ Conceived, sponsored and controlled by networks of national governments and international non-governmental organisations, they structure international cultural time and produce "'official" versions of public culture'.⁵⁴ Prime examples that have become a permanent feature of modern life are Expos (or International / World Fairs), the Olympics and the soccer World Cup. Whilst the world's premier soccer tournament branched out from the Olympics after 1928, the Games themselves would be unimaginable without the growth of Expos, which began in earnest in the mid nineteenth century.

As Roche points out, there is a parallel between the development of international mega-events and the emergence of Western modernity and national consciousness. In the era of industrial, economic and military internationalism from the late nineteenth century onwards, mega-events such as Expos proved to be the main vehicle of worldwide cultural interaction. In the US and Europe, the desire of national governments both to legitimise their position via popular support and to display the wares and wherewithal of their power found a natural form of expression in grand imperial or international fairs. Thus, governmental and cultural elites strove to project ideologies of nationhood, race and competition to the masses. Yet in so doing, their educational endeavours 'created a new form of public arena for exercising knowledge interests, personal freedoms and civil society'.⁵⁵ In particular, these 'places of pilgrimage to the fetish Commodity', as noted by Walter Benjamin in his study of nineteenth-century Paris, where 'the workers were to the fore as customers', provided public entertainment on a huge scale before 'the framework of the entertainment industry had [...] been formed'.⁵⁶

Although it must be remembered that Expos extended over several, and often many, months, their overall attendance gives a sense of the numerical shadow out of which the Olympic Games later had to emerge. The first such event in London in 1851 attracted 25 participating nations and was visited by 6 million people, Thomas Cook, the burgeoning travel agent, transporting 165,000 working-class tourists to the site. The average attendance at various fairs in London, Paris, Vienna and Philadelphia

⁵³ Roche (2000: 1, 3).

⁵⁴ Roche (2000: 1).

⁵⁵ Roche (2000: 52).

⁵⁶ Benjamin (1973: 165-6).

until (and including) Paris 1878 remained around 6.75 million. Paris 1889, Chicago 1893 and Paris 1900, which received 32.0, 27.5, and 48 million visitors respectively, marked a shift in scale, with the average attendance between Paris 1900 and San Francisco 1915 reaching 18.2 million. By the 1930s, excluding the small-scale event in Glasgow 1938, the average had almost doubled again to 35.6 million. These figures dwarf those of the first nine Olympic Games; the first remotely to match any Expo were Berlin 1936, and even these could only claim a Pyrrhic victory over the Glasgow Expo (2.6 million) which, statistically, appears a footnote anomaly to the exponential growth of the main genre. The Expos' domination of the mega-event can be evidenced further by the case of the London Olympics in 1908, which were celebrated in the largest stadium before the Second World War by some considerable margin (58,000). The reason why the Olympics on that occasion could enjoy an unprecedentedly large setting is due to the fact that the stadium was built for the pageants at a series of imperial expos to be held between 1908-1914 under Imre Kiralfy, with sport a significant, but secondary long-term consideration. When Rome had to withdraw from its role as host, the Olympics ended up being upgraded to business class.

This dominant Expo genre had recurrent central features, many of which rubbed off on the late Olympic developer.

- As already noted, Expos were driven by *political interest*. Primarily in the period before 1914, but continuing into the 1930s, this interest fed off imperial power structures – be it in London (1851, the 1890s and between 1908-14), Belgium (Antwerp 1894, Brussels 1897, Liege 1905), France (which celebrated its own North African possessions in 1878 but invited fellow colonial powers to join them in 1889) or in the US (where the grand expositions were intended not simply to reflect but ‘to shape’ American culture)⁵⁷.

- They were the site of lavish and spectacular *ceremony*. Queen Victoria, for instance, judged the opening ceremony at London 1851 ‘magical, so vast, so glorious, so moving [...] it united the industry of the nations of the earth’.⁵⁸ Towards the end of the same century it had become de rigueur for Expos to put on mass pageants that involved parades, choirs and drama with a variety of historical, contemporary or exotic themes.

- They were locations of *popular entertainment*, such as fairground attractions (particularly in the US) and early film. As the sites transformed from monolithic single buildings to a complex of pavilions (after Philadelphia 1876), these large-scale entertainment forms were eventually incorporated into and became an integral part of the exhibition site.

- But, as travel agent Thomas Cook argued, they were not simply ‘a show or place of amusement, but a Great School of Science, of Art, [and] of Industry’.⁵⁹ As such they served as a magnet not just for the working man whose custom Cook sought to gain, but also for *fascinated intellectuals* willing to bring their own contributions: Emile

⁵⁷ Rydell (1984: 237).

⁵⁸ Allwood (1977: 20).

⁵⁹ Buzard (1993: 64).

Durkheim (Paris 1900), Max Weber (St Louis 1904) and Albert Einstein (New York 1939) all spoke at Expo conferences.

- Primarily, Expos displayed, celebrated and advertised the cutting edge of *technological advancement*, for example: industrial machinery, the colt revolver (London 1851), the elevator (New York 1853), aluminium, the gasoline engine, submarine electricity cables (Paris 1867), monorail (Philadelphia 1876), the internal combustion engine, rubber tyres, refrigeration (Paris 1878), electric light (Paris 1889), the electric light bulb and train (Chicago 1893), the moving sidewalk (Paris 1900).

- But at Expos, the message and excitement was to a large extent the medium itself. Outside wars, they represented the *largest gatherings of humanity*. They were ‘effectively mass theatres in which “progress” [... was] dramatised as spectacle’.⁶⁰

- This spectacle of humanity and its technical development was housed in *architecturally innovative settings*: London’s Crystal Palace in 1851 was constructed out of over 300,000 panes of glass in a design that is held to be the precursor of the modern shopping mall. The Eiffel Tower, built for the Paris event in 1889, dominates the French capital’s skyline and has become the city’s symbol. In fact, the scale and impressiveness of their infrastructure meant that by the late nineteenth century, Expos had ‘come to take on the appearance of [...] self-contained and exotic “cities”’.⁶¹

The fact that the Olympics later took on a range of these features at various points in its early development is, however, not simply a direct result of structure (i.e. the Games naturally taking on the existing dominant form of mega-event) but also agency.⁶² The Paris Expos, as Eric Hobsbawm observed, formed the pinnacle of a series of cultural policies conceived by the new Third Republic between 1870 and 1914 to consolidate itself with the French public after defeat in the Franco-Prussian war.⁶³ The events in 1878 and 1889 (this latter being the largest, by a factor of three, in the genre’s history) made a huge impact on de Coubertin, who initially shared his government’s post-ignominy motivation but later appreciated the benefits of international cooperation. As an assistant to Frederick Le Play, who had organised Paris 1855 and 1867 and whose organisations had been given a leading role in the preparation for 1889, this event was not only to cement the peaceful turn in de Coubertin’s thinking, but expose him to the spell of spectacle that would keep him enthralled for the rest of his life.⁶⁴ Already interested enough in archaeology to suggest, unsuccessfully, that Olympia be a major theme of the Expo, de Coubertin nonetheless could marvel at the reconstruction of the ancient site on the basis of Curtius’s excavations and enjoy the few ‘Olympic Games’ organised on the Champs de Mars. Most impressive of all, however, were the parades, pomp and ceremony: 500,000 lined the streets of Paris to greet President Carnot as he processed under the Eiffel Tower to the Expo site, where great displays of national commemoration and celebration ensued. As MacAloon has already established, many of the rites and symbols witnessed on this occasion – entry procession, flag raising, national anthems,

⁶⁰ Roche (2000: 45).

⁶¹ Roche (2000: 45).

⁶² Booth (2004: 28) points out the fundamental difference between Roche and MacAloon’s arguments. I see them as complimentary.

⁶³ Hobsbawm (1992: 303).

⁶⁴ MacAloon (1981: 132-8).

presence of the head of state – rapidly sedimented out as the bedrock of Olympic tradition.

Coubertin's initial fascination with Expos is clear from the fact that, on his visit to the Chicago Expo of 1893, he is believed to have offered the city the opportunity to host the first Olympics after Athens and Paris. Paris 1900 and St Louis 1904, at which the Games were embedded in enormous independent fairs that paid little attention to the sporting sideshow, were to disabuse the founder of his enamourment, however. In Paris, some athletes were unaware that they had competed in the Olympic Games; in St Louis, the organisation had to keep company with the Anthropological Days that ran contrary to its creed of racial equality. By 1906, the Games had nearly been destroyed by their inspiration and needed to cut loose to survive.

By the 1920s, due to factors outlined above, the Olympic festival and sport in general had consolidated their position in public life. In the same period, Expos continued their implacable rise as *plus qua non ultra* events. It is not until 1932 and 1936 that the Olympics assume a scale of precision, organisation and spectacle that can match the Expos for awe. In fact, as the final sections of this paper will argue, it is only when the Olympics take up the gauntlet of spectacular expectation thrown down so early by the Expos that they achieve their decisive threshold. Before continuing that argument, however, it is important to stress once again how Expos set the tone and formed the context for massed events such as the Los Angeles and Berlin Olympics in 1932 and 1936.

At the Wembley imperial Expo of 1924-25, a self-proclaimed 'stock-taking of the whole resources of the Empire',⁶⁵ the stadium that staged the opening and closing ceremonies already had a capacity of 100,000, the same as that in Berlin twelve years later; the rituals were attended by the monarch and the radio broadcast of the opening conducted by King George V was the first time the British public as a whole had been gathered together to participate in a national event through the new medium, thus making it one of the first media events of modern British history. *Each day*, the stadium was the venue for the daily 'Pageant of Empire', which involved 15,000 performers and hundreds of animals, 5000 more, for instance, than Carl Diem's Festival Play performed only four times in Berlin. The new mass medium of film was made accessible to a broad public, who were mainly treated to travel film from parts of the empire in Africa. Certainly, in the realm of sport, the Worker's Olympics organised by the Socialist Worker's Sport International in Frankfurt (1925) and Vienna (1931), as well as the Czech Worker's Gymnastic Federation events in Prague (1921, 1927, 1934) set standards that Olympic organisers could not afford to ignore: Frankfurt featured mass choirs, flag waving and mass physical artistic displays, whilst Vienna hosted 100,000 spectators in a new purpose-built stadium.⁶⁶ These and the Soviet Spartakiads are probably what the Berlin Organising Committee had in mind when they felt the need to claim their own hosting of 'the only genuine world festival of our age'.⁶⁷ But the event that provided such a rich model for politically-motivated, technologically fed and medially-transmitted cultural spectacle was the Expo. By 1932 and 1936 respectively, the US was a past master of such events, and Germany, which had never had the chance to host one, was raring to go.

⁶⁵ Rydell (1993: 65).

⁶⁶ See Riordan (1984).

⁶⁷ Berlin Official Report (1936: 42).

3. 1932-1936 – the Olympic threshold

The Los Angeles Games in 1932 set themselves apart from their predecessors on account of their *organisation*, use of *media technology*, *glamour*, and the staging of Olympic *symbolism*. On the organisational front, Los Angeles had little to live up to. Amsterdam 1928 had been a shambles, with late-running events causing journalists to miss deadlines. In California, however, the organisers surpassed all expectations and set new standards of professionalism in sports event-management. The home media trumpeted that the US had produced ‘feats that may live as long in human history as those of their ancient prototypes’ and indeed recreated ‘the glory that was ancient Greece in a grand manner and on a vast scale’.⁶⁸ The judgement of Carl Diem, who examined the Games closely with an eye to the task of organising the next ones in Berlin, shows that such self-congratulation was completely justified. Participating in his fifth Opening Ceremony, Diem simply ‘had his breath taken away’ at the ‘overwhelming experience’ of marching into the stadium.⁶⁹ He was no less impressed by the precision of transport, training and accommodation arrangements, noting in his report, for instance, how buses arrived at the stadium at the end of the ceremony, the first having already shuttled the athletes back to their quarters as the last were just drawing up. The city had also re-organised its vehicular infrastructure, reserving one lane especially for Olympic officials.⁷⁰ Stadia and training facilities were ample proof of American wealth and beneficence. Guests were treated both with great generosity and exemplary efficiency – within ten minutes of arrival at the village, they had been settled in their rooms and were in possession of the necessary accreditation, tickets and bed linen.⁷¹ On the public and media side, the latest communication technology was implemented to achieve the smooth running of ticketing, information dissemination and media output. Huge effort was put into global advertising with the introduction of twice monthly bulletins to over 6000 foreign periodicals. Over 1500 Southern Californian amateur radio operators were supplied with information from the press department to be broadcast nightly to their international counterparts around the world.

Glamour was hardly alien to the world’s largest movie metropolis and the rise of sports as a form of national entertainment culture in the US in the 1920s led to a natural confluence of interests and public consumption. The first Tarzan film starring former Olympic swimming gold-medallist, Johnny Weissmuller, appeared in 1932,⁷² and multiple record-setting, publicity-seeking athletes such as ‘Babe’ Didrikson were feted – not always to the undivided joy of her team-mates – by the media, film and fashion industries.⁷³ At a party at the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios, Olympic guests mingled with film stars, others invited officials and dignitaries to their estates, and still others dropped in on the women’s quarters. It was rumoured that Argentinians

⁶⁸ Cited in Dyreson (1995: 34).

⁶⁹ Cited in Bauer (1998: 82-3).

⁷⁰ Bauer (1998: 84).

⁷¹ Bauer (1998: 97).

⁷² Keys (2001: 102).

⁷³ See Pieroth (1996).

had chased Marlene Dietrich and her bodyguards around a studio lot.⁷⁴ Bing Crosby, Cary Grant and the Marx brothers were prominent amongst the spectators.⁷⁵

And finally, Los Angeles 1932 put some of the final, but most significant touches to the Olympic's symbolic and ceremonial inventory, which had been developing incrementally since 1896. The first Games, inspired by the Paris Expo of 1889 (see above), already contained an opening ceremony with flags, hymns, cannon shots, the release of doves, and also raised flags to celebrate the victors; at Antwerp 1920, an oath was introduced for the athletes to swear under the new Olympic five-ring flag, which de Coubertin had designed in 1914; the motto 'Citius, Altius, Fortius' was suggested by the French cleric, Henri Didon, at the 1921 IOC session; and Amsterdam introduced the Olympic flame in 1928. Los Angeles, like the Workers Olympics in Frankfurt in 1925, inserted a show element into the opening ceremony – a feature that has become the focal point of each host city and nation's self-projection – and tidied up the medal ceremonies, inventing the medal rostrum and incorporating it visually and temporally into the sports event itself.⁷⁶

Equally significant in this respect was the invention of the Olympic Village, which – as can be witnessed by the recent autobiography of four-times rowing gold-medallist Matthew Pinsent – has become central to the athletes' Olympic experience.⁷⁷ The village was primarily conceived as a provision of inexpensive accommodation intended to encourage teams to undertake the long journey to the west coast during the Depression. When first proposed, it 'promptly met the anticipated scepticism that doubts nations are, after all, only members of one great family – the human family. This scepticism was gradually subordinated to a form of sufferance.' As the Official Report further explains, it was only the smaller nations who 'more willingly embraced the plan'.⁷⁸ Intense sporting rivalries almost certainly played a central role in this suspicion (the albeit fictional account of Paris 1924 in the film 'Chariots of Fire' captures the mood wonderfully). Borne of necessity, however, the Village was endowed with a purpose that went beyond mere housing. It was to be a 'miniature city [...] arisen magically atop the hills [...] atop the modern Mount Olympus, below which lay the modern Plains of Elis'. It was to be a 'miniature world [...] set up by itself, rigidly protected from the world outside', its material provision 'so perfect as to leave no avenue for failure save that of failure of the human self'.⁷⁹ It served, in the eyes of the organisers, as an embodiment and incubator of Olympic ideals: 'Here was a great happy family of forty nationalities putting the politicians of the world to shame; and not a single athlete forgot for a moment the country and blood from which he sprang, nor that shortly he would pit his skill and character against his brethren from other lands for the honour and country and sport.'⁸⁰ This first bringing together of different teams under one roof was nothing less, therefore, than rarefied and reified Olympism.

⁷⁴ Dyreson (1995: 32).

⁷⁵ Guttman (1992: 51).

⁷⁶ Albeit a day later in the relevant stadium.

⁷⁷ Pinsent (2004).

⁷⁸ Official Report (1932: 233).

⁷⁹ Official Report (1932: 233, 235).

⁸⁰ Official Report (1932: 236).

Having witnessed the greatest Games in the ‘leading sport nation of the world’, as the 1936 Official Report put it,⁸¹ Germany had much to live up to. Whilst Diem was on the one hand overwhelmed by Los Angeles’s superlative standards and had private reservations about whether Berlin had the necessary ‘innerlich ruhige Stimme’ for the Games, he seemed on the other hand sanguine about Germany’s chances of outperforming the US. One reason was that the combined effect of the distant location and the Depression had resulted in few foreign tourists and caused a fifty percent drop in the number of participating athletes from Amsterdam four years earlier. Diem was convinced that in terms of competitors, visitors (especially Germans living abroad) and the country’s ‘interest in sport [that was] not less than that of the United States’,⁸² the 1936 Games would ‘put all other events completely in the shade’.⁸³ He was also confident that ‘in Germany, the technical aspect [of the Games would] take care of itself’.⁸⁴ This was in October 1932, before the National Socialists came to power. When they did so three months later and, in the course of 1933, famously took a shine to the Olympic project, Diem’s and Lewald’s dreams were surpassed beyond imagination. There was deference still to the US’s role as leading sports nation – baseball (along with the popular German sport of gliding!) was included as one of the two demonstration sports, and the stadium architect Werner March inspected the Coliseum⁸⁵ – but the Games, in Hitler’s words, allowed Germany to ‘stand host to the entire world’ and their ‘preparations [were to] be complete and magnificent’. In short: the Games were to be the ‘task of the whole nation’.⁸⁶ Moreover, the German squad was assembled as early as 1933, prepared with the most modern training methods, and given ample time off work (often in the state sector) to hone their skills – a scheme that led to Germany topping the Olympic table in 1936, having come second in 1928 but only fifth in 1932, and deposing the US from first place by some margin⁸⁷ and for the first time since 1912.⁸⁸ Naturally both the nationalisation of the Olympic project and the investment in sporting success were central to the Nazi’s propaganda strategy, but they also matched, verbatim, calls made by the sports functionary Diem in late 1932. The delight expressed throughout the Official Report at the consequences of the political change in 1933 can be read as more than self-protecting (or otherwise) rhetoric on the part of Diem. Having planned Games that would cost 4 million Reichsmarks, he ended up with a stadium alone worth over six times that figure.⁸⁹

With such support, the Berlin Organising Committee had the financial and political infrastructure to add to the organisational momentum of Los Angeles. The Games were broadcast around the world on radio, and on television to special centres around Berlin, the administrative blocks and the Olympic village. Communication technology was raised to the highest level, and the world-wide publicity campaign tapped into the psychology of prospective foreign tourists for the first time. Berlin, a swinging

⁸¹ Official Report (1936: 43).

⁸² See also Diem’s draft proposals ‘Our Expectations’, produced in October 1932 and cited in Official Report (1936: 44).

⁸³ Cited in Bauer (1998: 106).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁸⁵ Alkemeyer (1996: 320).

⁸⁶ Official Report (1936: 55).

⁸⁷ Germany: Gold (33), Silver (26), Bronze (30), total (89); US: Gold (24), Silver (20), Bronze (12), total (56).

⁸⁸ A caveat even to this statistic: the US won one medal less overall (63) than hosts Sweden, but two more gold medals (25); Sweden entered 457 competitors, the US 174.

⁸⁹ Official Report (1936: 43, 67).

metropolis of the 1920s and home to the world-famous UFA film studios, could also put on the Ritz just as well as Los Angeles. Receptions, banquets, balls and a summer evening festival were organised with appropriate panache and suitable clientele.⁹⁰ Writing in his diary about the garden party organised by Goering at a ‘mansion far larger and more elaborately fitted out than the White House’, Dodd, the American Ambassador to Germany and sometime resident of the capital, noted that ‘there was hardly anything that modern inventors could have added’.⁹¹ Public displays such as the closing ceremony were just as lavish: the stadium was ‘lighted by electric machines from the top rows of the seats all round and by curious electric streams of lights meeting some two or three hundred feet above the performances’. They represented quite simply the most ‘elaborate show’ Dodd had ‘ever seen’.⁹² Berlin not only consolidated and perfected Los Angeles’s Olympic village – as a walk even now around its post-Soviet bomb-strewn site confirms⁹³ – but also added the final major, and perhaps even most significant, element to Olympic ritual: the torch relay. The Olympic flame had been introduced at Amsterdam 1928. Diem, who both had practical experience of organising relays (a series of which had helped finance German participation in Los Angeles, for instance) and was submersed in Olympism and German Hellenism, had the vision of transporting the flame from sacred Olympia to the heart of the host city, from hand to hand, country to country. The subsequent significance of this event for Olympic symbolism cannot be overestimated. Anthropologist John MacAloon, for instance, speaking with the authority of seven Olympiads’ worth of ethnographic fieldwork, argues that the torch relay is, ‘visually awe-inspiring’, ‘bigger in terms of direct, non-mass-mediated, person-to-person and person-to-symbol encounter than the Games themselves’ and ‘certainly [...] in aggregate a “mega-event” in itself.’⁹⁴

Berlin 1936 did not – as too many accounts uncritically imply – evolve in a vacuum. In many respects, it took over the baton reached to it by Los Angeles. But there was one fundamental difference: national backing. The State of California had issued bonds before the Wall Street collapse, but the Federal Government restricted its financial input to some limited support for its athletes, and even then they were only allowed the shortest possible stay in the village. Berlin, albeit for the government’s own propaganda purposes, simply blurred the inherent contradiction in the Olympic Charta between the jealously guarded independence of the host city and organising committee on the one hand and state approval (e.g. patronage) on the other. The actual unimportance of this distinction is evidenced in the fact that Diem and Lewald had signed a statement promising they would maintain the existence of such independence internationally to avoid negative reaction,⁹⁵ whilst in fact the complete interpenetration of government and civil agencies in the organising committee was openly recounted in the Official Report.⁹⁶ Whilst even in 1972 the IOC still maintained that the Games were given to a city and not a country,⁹⁷ Berlin 1936 had

⁹⁰ Official Report (1936: 76).

⁹¹ Dodd (1941: 346).

⁹² Dodd (1941: 348).

⁹³ My thanks to Markus Hesselmann for a organising a memorable private tour in Berlin 2004.

⁹⁴ MacAloon (2005, forthcoming).

⁹⁵ Krüger (1975).

⁹⁶ For instance, Official Report (1936: 372-3).

⁹⁷ When the Munich organisers minted coins bearing the motto ‘Olympic Games in Germany [rather than Munich] 1972’, the GDR forced the IOC to have them withdrawn. Incidentally, the tactic backfired: the coins became a collectors’ item and sold out immediately.

long since made that distinction *de facto* null and void. A glance, for instance, at London's current bid for the 2012 Games, is evidence in itself that national prestige, involvement and backing is now taken for granted. Berlin made the games bigger than Los Angeles through national, not just municipal, aspirations and finance. One might question the menace with which these aspirations were sometimes achieved,⁹⁸ but the consequences for the Olympics were clear: after Berlin, it would no longer be possible to host the Games without such backing.

The political aspect of the 1936 Olympics has dominated scholarship's extensive treatment of them, with opinion spread across a broad spectrum. The two extremes are marked by Krüger on the one hand,⁹⁹ who in his latest article argues that the Games were a post-modern event about which 'it is impossible to record the "truth"', and 'continuity theorists' such as Hoberman and Brohm on the other,¹⁰⁰ who assert that the IOC's political outlook was such that it could only really flourish in right-wing and fascist countries. Not wishing to engage in a full debate with these positions, it should, however, be noted that they are open to obvious challenge. To argue broadly that the Games are a matter of individual perspective, for instance, is to cast every single one of them into the swirling eddies of post-modernity. And to claim that the IOC and fascism fitted hand and glove *per se* is retrospectively to do the Nazi's job for them, identity with the ethos and goals of Olympism having been their constant claim around the 1936 event.

Between these poles, shades of opinion overlap and run into one another. Burnett¹⁰¹ (and occasionally Teichler)¹⁰² emphasizes the manipulation of the Games by the National Socialists, Hitler magnanimously inviting the readers of the French daily 'Le Soir' to take a critical look at Germany as they travelled around it, for instance, whilst simultaneously re-arming and in the first half of 1936 in particular filling the concentration camps to bursting point not just with gypsies, beggars and prostitutes, but also with political prisoners from the ranks of the Workers' Sport whose international organisation had called for a boycott of the Berlin Games. Most other scholars, however, argue persuasively against the basic premise of sport's manipulability. Guttman notes that whilst the Nazis might have scored some sort of propaganda coup with the Games, their racial ideology was undone by the slippery nature of sport's inherent unpredictability (e.g. Jesse Owens four gold medals)¹⁰³ – a view that tallies with the current official IOC account.¹⁰⁴ Teichler points out how *individuals* could be deliberately wooed and manipulated by the Nazi regime: feeling undervalued by his native land and, like many members of Western elites, fearing the 'evil of Bolshevism', the long since retired but symbolically resonant Coubertin could be lured into focussing on apparent affinities in outlook with the National Socialists

⁹⁸ Teichler (2003: 213) notes, for instance, the following NSDAP statements: 'Daher soll es besondere Aufgabe der SA sein, unauffällig aber doch eindringlich auf die Wichtigkeit der kommenden Wochen für die Zukunft und den Weiteraufbau Deutschlands, in ihrem Bekanntenkreis hinzuweisen'; and 'Jeder deutsche Volksgenosse, der sich in diesem Zusammenhang irgend etwas zu Schulden kommen läßt, ist ein Schädling am ganzen deutschen Volk und muß daraus Folgen ziehen'.

⁹⁹ Krüger (2004).

¹⁰⁰ Hoberman (1995), Brohm (1986) (see also Alkemeyer 1996: 19).

¹⁰¹ For example: Burnett (1985).

¹⁰² Teichler (2003).

¹⁰³ Guttman (2005, forthcoming).

¹⁰⁴ See www.olympic.org/uk/games/past (retrieved 26 February 2005).

(body culture as moral regenerator) and ignoring fundamental differences.¹⁰⁵ The soccer functionary Jules Rimes' praise of Italian sporting supremacy – 'a faith able to perform miracles'¹⁰⁶ – might be accounted for by some of the same reasons. Alkemeyer shows how the deep, open reservoir of Olympic symbolism allows for the creation of affinities, which, in the case of Nazi Germany, was achieved infinitesimally and subliminally from within.¹⁰⁷ The result is a semiotic amalgam which is at once both Olympic and National Socialist. Whilst Alkemeyer leaves the question of agency vague, Eisenberg argues for a balanced, mutual exploitation between bourgeois sports functionaries such as Diem and the regime, which resulted in the Games representing a 'time out' from normal National Socialist policy.¹⁰⁸

The balance of opinion, therefore, points to National Socialist involvement but also to the relative autonomy of the sporting event, to capillary control with a simultaneous light touch. The reason for this is clear: despite the regime's natural antipathy towards the universalistic ideals of the movement,¹⁰⁹ the Games offered a ready-made template for self-promotion. At home, they allowed the Nazis to mix popular interest in sport and elite attachment to Hellenism with notions of their own Reich's eternal pedigree;¹¹⁰ and abroad, they permitted figures such as Field Marshal von Blomberg, the Reich War Minister, to read straight from the script of world peace and harmony.¹¹¹ The Games were thus too valuable for the Nazis to ruin with a heavy hand. As was the case when fascist Italy hosted and won the soccer World Cup in 1934, propaganda for the Games was inflected differently at home and away and had varying degrees of success with different constituencies. In Italy, 'the functioning of the tournament involved disguising to a certain degree the Fascist potential of the event and its iconography, while simultaneously attempting to present a Fascist image of it to an Italian public'.¹¹² Germany similarly exploited the Games for nationalistic purposes, particularly in the year running up to their commencement. For instance, the procession of the huge Olympic Bell from ceremony to ceremony throughout Germany functioned as a national(istic) torch relay, and a travelling Olympic exhibition that graphically and impressively fused Nazi power with Olympic legitimisation served as much to generate enthusiasm for and awe of the state as it did for the Games and their ideals. Krüger's study of reactions at home and abroad, as well as NS reports studying these, shows that the Games had a positive effect at home but hardly swayed opinion of Germany at all abroad.¹¹³ This is certainly confirmed by the memoirs of eyewitnesses such as Ambassador Dodd.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ Teichler (1982).

¹⁰⁶ Cited in Gordon and London (2005, forthcoming).

¹⁰⁷ Alkemeyer (1996).

¹⁰⁸ Eisenberg (1999).

¹⁰⁹ See Keys (2001).

¹¹⁰ See Roche (2000: 116-7), Alkemeyer (1996: 238, 329).

¹¹¹ In the Official Report (1936: 166), von Blomberg receives a full-page picture in uniform with the accompanying quotation: 'This Europe of ours is too small for a war, but it is large enough to contain a field of combat upon which the youth of the world will win a decisive battle for the cause of peace. To cooperate in the solution of this task is the sincere wish of the entire German nation.'

¹¹² (Gordon and London 2005, forthcoming).

¹¹³ Krüger (1972).

¹¹⁴ Dodd on 29 July 1936 notes in his diary that he is returning to 'Berlin where democracy is denounced almost every day' (1941: 344). He also reports a curious incident at Goebbels' reception for diplomats and Olympic functionaries on the Pfaueninsel. After dinner – 'some 2000 people supposed to be present[, t]here were beautiful lights strung all over the island, some in trees' - dancing began 'on an elevated platform near us', and then 'about 10 o'clock there was shooting of a kind that suggested war.'

Importantly, however, the Games proved a huge success with competitors and sports enthusiasts alike. Jesse Owens, famously, observed that he had experienced no discrimination in Germany. Hitler overruled Goebbels to keep him in the final cut of Leni Riefenstahl's 'Olympia', whereas the 'Atlanta Constitution', 'the most liberal of southern US newspapers', carried no pictures of him.¹¹⁵ Athletes might have had their incoming mail censored and been spied upon, but they did not seem to notice this and appreciated that they were not barred from restaurants as Mexican and Japanese competitors, for instance, had been in Los Angeles.¹¹⁶ From the spectators' point of view, the Games were a phenomenal success. The spectacle elements offered fantastic entertainment – Diem's festival play (as marvelled at by Ambassador Dodd), scheduled for the opening and closing evenings had to be put on twice more after the Games had ended. In cognisance of sport's mass popularity, the pricing structure for tickets was levelled out by comparison to the broad differential of Los Angeles, thus ensuring full stadia for almost every event. The success of this policy can be seen in the fact that at the Olympic soccer tournament – where the attendance somewhat disappointed the organisers! – 25 percent more people turned out in four venues in one city than did for the World Cup of identical format two years earlier across the whole of Italy.¹¹⁷ Significantly, amidst discontent about high ticket prices, not even the stadium in Rome was sold out for the final when the hosts became World Champions.¹¹⁸ As witnessed by comments written in the guest-book at a Berlin exhibition about the Games in 1996, eyewitnesses, even in the context of the Federal Republic's trademark sensitivities, still enthused about a perfectly organised, breathtaking sports festival.¹¹⁹ German-Jewish émigré and renowned Freud expert Peter Gay's childhood memoirs confirm the weight and value of this evidence.¹²⁰ Although 'the occasional sight of Hitler was a nauseating by-product' for the then thirteen-year-old Berliner, the Games were 'breathlessly anticipated and just as breathlessly enjoyed': 'the atmosphere was electric and contagious'. As well as offering the potential for resistance – the dropping of the baton by German ladies team in the sprint relay on their way to a certain gold medal 'remains one of the greatest moments of [Gay's] life' –, the Games were indeed a sports event of the highest quality.¹²¹

The Berlin Olympics were, then, first and foremost a sporting success, and they were this – as I have argued – because they received the serious national backing that has

This continued for a half hour, a great many people complaining at this form of war propaganda. People at our table trembled when the bombing made such a terrible noise. There were of course no real shots or shells, but there were explosions which almost made the ground shake. [...] The propaganda of it all may have pleased the Germans. It had a bad influence on foreigners, as reported to me, in spite of the fine entertainment of all concerned.'

¹¹⁵ Guttman (2005, forthcoming).

¹¹⁶ Dyreson (1995: 40).

¹¹⁷ The World Cup in Italy had 17 matches (the odd number due to replay of the quarter-final between Italy and Spain) in 8 different cities; total ticket sales reached just under 400,000. The soccer tournament in the 1936 World Cup comprised 16 matches, with total ticket sales recorded at 507,469. In Italy, the host nation won the tournament; in Berlin, Germany lost in the quarter-finals to Norway.

¹¹⁸ Gordon and London (2005, forthcoming).

¹¹⁹ Teichler (200: 210), Rürop (1996).

¹²⁰ Gay (1998).

¹²¹ For a fascinating and moving analysis of the complex symbiosis of political resistance and sporting pleasure, see Eduardo Archetti's (2005, forthcoming) account of Argentina's hosting and winning of the soccer World Cup under the military junta in 1978.

since, even in the age of media and corporate sponsorship, become essential to the Games' existence. But their success also lay in a particular understanding of Olympism that required national backing for its full implementation. This vision incorporated notions of artistic harmony, technology and the city.

4. Technical and artistic harmony in 1936

Certainly Los Angeles knew that the Olympics were in town. The city was 'gaily decorated' having awarded itself funds to adorn the streets with 'the national flags of all Olympic nations and the special Olympic flags, combined with various large Olympic insignia'. In addition 'many manufacturers of decorations produced special material appropriate for the occasion, which was sold to individual building owners and merchants and contributed materially to the colourful festive dress of the city during the celebration.'¹²² At first sight, pictures of the decked-out streets in Los Angeles and Berlin look similar. But on closer inspection, there is a qualitative difference: whereas Los Angeles wears a 'colourful festive dress', Berlin has transformed itself into an organic Olympic whole. The City of Berlin 'was called upon to appropriate millions of marks' in order to 'secure streets of approach to the Reich Sport Field' and provide for the 'decoration of the streets, especially the "Via Triumphalis" leading from the Town Hall to the Olympic Stadium [and] the landscaping of the outlying sections of the city'.¹²³ As the Official Report states, the decorative scheme for the city was 'ordered by the [...] Mayor and President of the Council [...] in collaboration with the Reich Minister of Propaganda [and] combined utility with beauty, simplicity and colourfulness in a highly effective manner.'¹²⁴ The difference in effect is captured by Gunter Gebauer's observation: 'They produce[d] a rare density and fullness of signs – spaces, time, contests, the masses, the athletes and the nations – literally nothing escape[d] the symbolising mania of the organisers. Everything represents something else; every thing, every event is connected with another; the real becomes a symbol for the unreal, "everything was like in a film".'¹²⁵ For an understanding of the essence of the Berlin Games, this 'real-life' film is certainly as important as Leni Riefenstahl's 'Olympia' that appeared two years after the event with a specifically commemorating, rather than neutral archiving, aim.¹²⁶ To allow Riefenstahl to 'catch the play of muscles of the body [and] the concentration of the face during a record performance' many competitors 'willingly underwent the ordeal of a repetition of [their] contest for film purposes'.¹²⁷

¹²² Official Report (1932: 179).

¹²³ Official Report (1936: 374).

¹²⁴ Official Report (1936: 454; for further description, see 454-9).

¹²⁵ Gebauer (1996: 253). The inset quotation is from S. Kracauer (unreferenced).

¹²⁶ The Official Report (1936: 329) gives a threefold rationale for Riefenstahl's film in a telling order. It was to be 'a document, a report on the first very large representative sports meeting of the New Germany. [...] It may be that a future generation will again see Berlin Olympic Games, but coming generations shall still enjoy seeing the Games of 1936 and shall learn lessons from them. [...] The aim was not merely to photograph the course of a competition from the start to the winning post, from the beginning to the end, but rather also to render eternal in the film the special charms of the various kinds of sport, their special beauties, their grace and their power, and, not least of all, the gripping quality of the picture as a whole. [...] The third and certainly not less important task [!] was to give expression to the beauty of the Olympic idea with persuasive power, to express the idea of peacefully competing nations and the development and world-wide importance of the Olympic Games in general.'

¹²⁷ Official Report (1936: 334).

De Coubertin had always thought of sport as part of high culture. Most practically he persuaded the delegates at the 1906 IOC congress in Paris to vote in competitions in literature, music and the visual arts from 1908. In 1912, under a thinly veiled pseudonym, he won a medal for literature himself. More fundamental, however, was the aspiration that the Games should form a harmonious whole. Inspired both by Wagner and the English philosopher John Ruskin, who created the English Arts and Crafts movement, Coubertin conceived of the Games as not just containing art and music, but as forming a piece of complete artwork in themselves: ‘the sporting event should be in a unity of the athlete with the spectator, with the surroundings, the decoration, the landscape etc.’¹²⁸ This underlying harmony was rarely recognised, never mind attempted in Olympic cities. But as the planning for Berlin as early as 1932 suggests, Diem, who was de Coubertin’s primary exegete, had set himself the goal of turning the ideal into reality: ‘An Olympic Festival must reveal absolute harmony in every aspect, and for this reason it is essential that the supervisors and directors exhibit complete unity of purpose in dealing with the principal as well as minor problems.’¹²⁹ Already in 1930, Diem had noted that ‘the festive character of the former Olympic Games had left much to be desired from the viewpoint of harmony’¹³⁰ and set about his principle strategy for achieving the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’: the ‘Olympische Jugend’ (Olympic Youth), a Festival Play that eventually came to involve an overall cast of 10,000, singing and dancing to music by Carl Orff and Werner Egk, culminating in the choral movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which de Coubertin had been keen to introduce to Olympic ritual, and a ‘Lichtdom’, a cathedral of light whose beams met high above the stadium.

Diem’s specific idea for achieving Olympic harmony via the Festival Play, however, became expanded beyond recognition once the National Socialists came to power. Ironically, one of Hitler’s first requests for the Reichssportsfeld, along with the famous demand for greater stadium capacity, involved the building of an open-air amphitheatre.¹³¹ More significantly, the whole construction work now fell under the auspices of the Minister of the Interior, who was ‘entrusted with the task of welding [the] parts into a pleasing, artistic and organic whole’.¹³² At the Reichssportsfeld, this involved the transplanting of ‘the existing trees, so that at the time of the Games, the grounds would seem to be a uniform whole created by nature. [...] Even gigantic poplars over 65 feet high, oak trees 60 to 70 years old, lime and large birch trees were planted in the last days before the Games. [...] Some portions of the grounds seemed to be ancient parklands.’¹³³ The site for the Olympic village, although naturally positioned in the vicinity of a ‘primeval forest’ (known as the ‘Enchanted Forest’), was crafted into ‘beautiful nature and deep peace’ via the lowering of the water course by seven meters to give ‘the impression of [its] being the natural continuation of the landscape’ and the eradication of ‘every possible breeding place for mosquitoes’. Germany at large was mapped onto this perfect idyll, each house being ‘named after a German city’ with the decoration motifs selected accordingly, ‘the common rooms

¹²⁸ On Wagner, see Alkemeyer (1996: 148-9, 151, 306, 409-12); on Ruskin, see Krüger (2004), from whom the de Coubertin quotation (from 1911) is taken.

¹²⁹ Official Report (1936: 44; see also 251).

¹³⁰ Official Report (1936: 42).

¹³¹ Official Report (1936: 54).

¹³² Official Report (1936: 135).

¹³³ Official Report (1936: 138).

containing attractive paintings revealing the cultural and economic life of the [relevant] town.¹³⁴

National backing and the vision of harmony combined to place, for the first time, a great emphasis on the city itself in which the Games were taking place. This ran contrary to the original intentions of de Coubertin, who in fact wanted his harmonious whole to be a self-contained unit, located in sacred seclusion away from the urban context of normal secular life. Hoteliers and traders might continue their usual business in the modern city, but the stadium should mark a threshold akin to the division between ancient Altis and the profane city.¹³⁵ In 1936, however, the Games took over the city as much as the city took over the Games. From the outset, Hitler recognised the regenerative potential that the Olympic festival offered. As in Los Angeles four years earlier,¹³⁶ employment was a key issue. ‘When a nation has 4,000,000 unemployed’, Hitler announced ‘it must seek ways and means of creating work for them’.¹³⁷ His resonant municipal-economic warcry ‘We will build’ led to the engagement of 500 firms and 2,600 workers on a daily basis for two and a half years.¹³⁸ The output of this labour at the extensive Reichssportfeld site alone was to provide a lasting legacy for the city of Berlin: not just ‘spacious facilities for the assemblies and traditional festivals which [were seen as] an important feature in Germany’s modern development’¹³⁹ but also, specifically, much needed sports grounds.¹⁴⁰ The success of this plan can be seen in the fact that Germany is simply renovating the 1936 stadium in Berlin (that was built following the modern bowl technique) for the showpiece final of the 2006 World Cup, whereas London has razed Wembley, constructed only 10 years earlier for the Empire Festival (see above), in order to bid for future mega-events. But the Reichssportfeld was just the beginning. Across Berlin, the city treated itself to an Olympic make-over, both cosmetically and infrastructurally: ‘unsightly buildings and other “eyesores” were covered with greenery’,¹⁴¹ 1,300,000 marks were poured into railway constructions around the Reichssportfeld and other transport projects around the city.¹⁴² Civic boosterism, executed to this significant extent for the first time in 1936, has since become an integral feature of the Olympics.¹⁴³ If the internet had existed in 1936, the Berlin website would have featured the same key words and links as those supporting London’s 2012 bid: ‘Our city’, ‘Best-ever Games transport’, ‘A lasting legacy’, ‘Total government support’.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁴ Quotations from the Official Report (1936: 172-5). See also Alkemeyer (1996: 324).

¹³⁵ De Coubertin (1966 [1910]: 10).

¹³⁶ Dyreson (1995: 26).

¹³⁷ Official Report (1936: 55).

¹³⁸ Official Report (1936: 137).

¹³⁹ Official Report (1936: 55).

¹⁴⁰ See section 2a above and the Official Report (1936: 130-4).

¹⁴¹ Official Report (1936: 459).

¹⁴² For example: the first part of the enormous reconstruction project of the Zoological Garden Station as well as the rebuilding of the Tiergarten Station, the railway bridge across the Charlottenburger Chaussee, and the acceleration of work on the North-South Municipal Railway (Official Report 1936: 381).

¹⁴³ It is estimated, for instance, that the 12 billion US dollars pledged for cleaning up and improving the infrastructure of Beijing will outsize the actual costs of the 2008 Games themselves by a factor of twelve (Brownell 2004: 60).

¹⁴⁴ www.london2012.org (retrieved 18 February 2005).

The motor that drove the civic boosterism of 1936 was, as outlined briefly above, technology. But more important still was the technocratic desire to implement it and turn the city of Berlin into a finely oiled machine. On the opening day, for instance, the Olympic event clicked smoothly into action across the whole capital: the Wehrmacht sounded a massive reveille, which was followed by children's sports displays in every part of the city, and then the huge procession down the Via Triumphalis to the stadium, where the opening ceremony was concluded after nightfall with Diem's Festival Play. Hundreds of thousands of people were in the right place at the right time. For this to be possible, every part of the metropolis, small and large, and every access route and entry point to it had to be in good working order. Graf Helldorf, President of the Berlin Police Force, banned the drying of washing on balconies and in open windows during the Games, to preserve the pristine look of the facades.¹⁴⁵ He also oversaw the remodelling of Berlin's road system, ridding important traffic-dense arteries of stationary vehicles and transforming less vital routes into complexly organised parking lots.¹⁴⁶ The population played its part – according to the Report, cheerfully – too. 'When the escorting police automobile announced the approach of an arriving team, traffic in all directions stopped automatically and the public formed welcoming lines on both sides of the streets.'¹⁴⁷ Before their initial arrival in the city, foreign teams were accompanied from the frontier and greeted officially on disembarkation in Berlin, the 'day and hour' having been ascertained 'through a specially arranged information service'.¹⁴⁸ Non-competing visitors were whisked equally efficiently to their destinations: 'representatives of the OB [the group as a whole commanding 16 languages] were placed on each express train bound for the Capital City so that travellers coming to the Games had the possibility of obtaining lodgings directly without having to proceed to a local lodgings bureau upon arriving.'¹⁴⁹ Such logistical feats, initiated to some degree in Los Angeles but magnified intensely in Berlin, have now become the organisational norm at the Olympics,¹⁵⁰ such that any lapse in standards, as at Atlanta 1996, casts a long shadow over a host city and its event in the cultural memory.

In Berlin, however, there is an evident fascination with technology and the technocratic –taken today as a given –, which is both very much of its time and instructive for 1936's key role in the event's evolution. In the technological matrix that made the Games function, human bodies became machine-like in their operations. In the transmission centre, 'a single button served 200 North American transmitting stations, which would have instantaneously cut out had the engineer serving the contact made *a mistake of only a centimeter*. This gigantic switchboard was erected in order to limit the sources of error. Yet [...] the radio engineers bore the responsibility hour by hour, day by day, *with iron calm* at their posts far below, under *concrete walls yards thick*, through which *no murmur from outside* could be heard,

¹⁴⁵ Alkemeyer (1996: 309).

¹⁴⁶ Official Report (1936: 438).

¹⁴⁷ Official Report (1936: 87).

¹⁴⁸ Official Report (1936: 430).

¹⁴⁹ Official Report (1936: 422-3).

¹⁵⁰ A journalist's report on 'how Sydney won the Games' (cited in Miller et al. 2001: 250) speaks of – leaving all questions of veracity aside – the technical and organisational prowess Olympic functionaries are now expected / imagined to have: 'Traffic lights were timed to turn green for IOC members' limousines [...] Samaranch's hotel radio was 'fixed' so it could not pick up a programme likely to broadcast negative comments about the IOC boss, the [...] Australian Opera general manager ensured that shows never started until IOC delegates had taken their seats'.

where *neither outer light nor sunshine* could pass, breathing *artificial air*, seeing by *artificial light*, and *surrounded by electric currents* which they mastered and sent round the globe. In this manner they *silently* served the Olympic ideals.¹⁵¹ This subordination of the body to the mechanical is further witnessed by the inclusion of a tiny detail in the Report's treatment of the medical service: 'an elderly spectator died of angina pectoris in the Stadium during the competitions, but the other visitors did not realize that anything had happened because the body was immediately removed without causing any disturbance.'¹⁵² These brief examples show that Berlin's techno-fascination is on an entirely different level to what went before. Diem's description of Zack Farmer, the General Secretary in 1932, whom he encountered minutes after the close of the Los Angeles Games, is instructive in this respect. 'Standing modestly in the corner of the [VIP] box, was a man with a *boxer's face*, dressed in an *everyday grey suit* [...] gazing down onto the empty stadium with *shockingly glazed and exhausted eyes*. [...] He had worked *beyond human capacity* for more than two years to put on an event that lasted two weeks. When the flag went down, it was almost as if it all hadn't even happened. [...] [During the Games] *you could see him* everywhere, but completely still, without making any gestures or orders, everything ran by itself *under his gaze*.'¹⁵³ In 1932, the emphasis was on the *human* element controlling a vast enterprise. In 1936, as Diem's description of the burden of stepping into Farmer's shoes suggests, power had shifted. The General Secretary of 1936 was the only one with full knowledge of 'the *mechanism* of the festival' and the ability to hear 'if there was an unusual tapping on any part of the *machine*.'¹⁵⁴

Thus the Games enveloped themselves and unfolded within a technological imagination; but simultaneously they distanced themselves from this too. A prime example can be found in the gymnastic demonstrations. The Germans had won critical acclaim when they put on a mass display at Amsterdam 1928, and prompted by a request made in 1934 by the Swedish Gymnastics Federation at the IAAF congress in Stockholm, decided to arrange such demonstrations in 1936. Taking place at twilight after the closure of the main athletic events, Germany along with seven other nations (including Sweden with a group of 1000 performers) produced great displays of collective gymnastic activity, the continental rival to modern sport. Writing in the 'Deutsche Turnzeitschrift', Dapper commented on the difference between the Jahn-based German and Ling-based Swedish techniques. His use of terminology is significant: the Germans were 'most fluid in their movement' with 'moves selected to have an effect on the audience'; contrasted to these 'waves and swings' were the Swedes who work with the 'greatest precision and monotony like the running of a machine' and thus appear 'lifeless' and without understanding for the unity of 'body, mind and soul'.¹⁵⁵ This sharp dichotomy has much to do with long-established conflicting gymnastic outlooks, but the vocabulary zone in which it is embedded is not restricted to gymnastics. The negative image of machines had also been used to make distinctions in modern sport itself, despite its status as by-product of, and metaphor for industrial society. Looking back gloomily in the month of the 1918 armistice to the glory days for the American team at Stockholm 1912, sportswriter William G. Shepherd wrote in 'Everybody's Magazine': 'Out there, in

¹⁵¹ Official Report (1936: 337), emphasis mine.

¹⁵² Official Report (1936: 467-8).

¹⁵³ Cited in Bauer (1998: 104), my translation.

¹⁵⁴ Diem (1974: 191), cited in Eisenberg (1999: 419).

¹⁵⁵ Cited in Alkemeyer (1995: 455).

the centre of the field, are the ghosts of those trimly clad German teams [...] with no individuality, no personal responsibility, except to see that you do your best to win the coveted cup by crushing your individuality, [...] with] machine-like movements.¹⁵⁶ Thus, physical culture, like the modernism out of which it evolved, had a dual attitude to machinery and technological advancement: it embraced it and at once rejected it.

This duality was at the heart of both Olympism and National Socialism, which made technology such a potent force at the Berlin Games. Coubertin's Olympic ideal was premised on the existence of the modern industrial world; it did not propose to destroy it, but simply to educate men how best to live within its structures.¹⁵⁷ In practical terms, before Los Angeles 1932, Stockholm 1912 was widely regarded as the best Games. Brundage's observations echo those of many: 'I was a young engineer just from the university. The efficiency and almost mathematical precision with which the events were handled and the formal correctness of the arrangements made a great impression on me'.¹⁵⁸ Stockholm, significantly, was the first Games to introduce electronic timing, a phenomenon that, as the very essence of sport's modernity and internationality,¹⁵⁹ each subsequent Olympics (particularly those in 1932, 1936)¹⁶⁰ strove to nudge beyond the cutting edge. Speaking on German radio in 1935 to launch the long eve of the Games, de Coubertin summarized the principles of Olympism. Sitting alongside his usual emphasis on body culture, is the following simile: 'The springtime of humanity expresses itself in youthful maturity, which might be compared with a superb machine complete in all of its details and ready for full operation.' At first site somewhat surprising, this acceptance of the mechanical is fully in keeping with the deep structure of Olympism.

It is significant that the 1936 Official Report gives prominence to the excerpt of Coubertin's speech that highlights machines and not the body.¹⁶¹ For the Games' fascination with machines and technology is also sustained by the National Socialist's 'reactionary modernism', that 'specifically German response to [the] universal dilemma of societies facing the consequences of the industrial and French revolutions', namely how to reconcile national traditions with modern culture, technology, and political and economic institutions.¹⁶² As Herf has shown, the Third Reich relied on a fundamental 'paradoxical combination of irrationalism and technics' that had its roots in a tradition which viewed technology as part of the 'Kulturnation'.¹⁶³ Focussing on the subject of Fritz Lang's seminal film 'Metropolis', which expresses modernity's angst about, and attraction to technology in a particularly brilliant and complex fashion, Rutsky cites Theweleit's observation about Nazi wholeness, i.e. it involves 'a mediation of [...] repressive modernity [...] with a repressed "eternal" spirit, the spirit of Germany'.¹⁶⁴ In National Socialism, such mediation is not a veil that hides the 'truth', but the 'truth' itself, and this, as Rutsky

¹⁵⁶ Cited in Dyreson (1998: 204).

¹⁵⁷ Alkemeyer (1996: 49, 95, 96, 100, 101-2, 162, 172, 189-90, 208).

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Guttmann (1992: 32).

¹⁵⁹ Eichberg (1978).

¹⁶⁰ See the Official Report (1936: 283).

¹⁶¹ Official Report (1936: 339); the page is devoted to a facsimile of the French version of de Coubertin's speech and a translation of this excerpt. The quotation in the last paragraph is taken from the Report.

¹⁶² Herf (1984: 217).

¹⁶³ Herf (1984: 220).

¹⁶⁴ Rutsky (2000: 233). Theweleit (1988: 410-12).

argues, is why Hitler and Goebbels so admired the film. Albert Speer's 'Cathedral of Light' is a prime mediatory example of the Nazi's own making: 'it represents itself as modern and technological on the one hand, and, on the other hand, as heir to a mythical Aryan tradition, of which the Gothic cathedrals are a part'.¹⁶⁵ It appeared, famously, in Leni Riefenstahl's 'Triumph of the Will' and at the end of Diem's Festival Play at the Olympic Games. This latter, therefore, is a typical amalgam of tradition and modernity, as the many details in the Official Report about its technical requirements confirm.¹⁶⁶ A similar mediation can be seen in the design of the stadium: the cladding of the exterior in permanency-connoting German stone being constantly penetrated by public reports of the interiors' technical specifications. And it occurs again in the portrayals of the making of Riefenstahl's 'Olympia' film: pits, towers, circling aeroplanes, observation balloons – 'anything that technical imagination could possibly create was tried out with the aim of obtaining photographs of a variety never attained'.¹⁶⁷ Were it not for the 'meticulously exact distribution of the photographers', the 'complete unpredictability' of the German women's relay team 'dropping the staff at the last change-over',¹⁶⁸ – one of the best moments in Peter Gay's eventful life – would have been lost to posterity.

Much has been made of the glorification of the body at the 1936 Olympics.¹⁶⁹ This has been at the expense of an adequate appreciation of their technological underpinning. They caught up with the Expos in terms of hardware, whilst inverting that genre's relation between pathos and technology, foregrounding the former over the latter.¹⁷⁰ Berlin was a 'Gesamtkunstwerk', an artistic whole that went beyond even de Coubertin's imagination. It wove a density of symbolism across the city, such that being in Berlin in August 1936 was, to borrow Kracauer's phrase, like 'being in a film'. No doubt, this served national political purposes. After all, 'up to the end', as Deleuze noted, 'Nazism [thought] of itself in competition with Hollywood'.¹⁷¹ Internationally, however, the Hollywood-Germany axis between 1932 and 1936 had a more lasting legacy. The work of art in the age of technical reproduction, as Benjamin wrote in the year of the Berlin Games,¹⁷² is designed not simply for reproduction but 'for reproducibility'; and the aura of the work of art defines itself as 'always-already [having] taken leave of its viewer, always-already being on its way'. Like Los Angeles, Berlin built in commemoration of itself as it went along. But following and surpassing the example of Los Angeles, it produced, more importantly, technically superlative Games that were, vitally, technically reproducible. In this sense, Roche's conclusion that supernationalist regimes 'influenced [...] public cultural events negatively by providing processes and arenas for the expression of political and cultural conflict' misses the main point. The Olympics didn't need the supernationalist regimes to make them political. Morally reproachable or not, Brundage's praise of Berlin – 'a victory for the Olympic idea' – is more accurate. Since 1936, sporting mega-events have done little more than tinker with Berlin's blueprint.

¹⁶⁵ Rutsky (2000: 242).

¹⁶⁶ Official Report (1936: 577-87).

¹⁶⁷ Official Report (1936: 330).

¹⁶⁸ Official Report (1936: 328).

¹⁶⁹ For the latest contribution to this aspect, see Schaub (2003).

¹⁷⁰ Alkemeyer (1996: 188).

¹⁷¹ Deleuze (1989: 264), cited in Rutsky (2000: 244).

¹⁷² Walter Benjamin's famous essay was composed in 1935 and appeared in 1936.

Table 1 Vital Olympic Statistics

		BIDS	ATHLETES		STADIUM	TICKETS	EVENTS	MEDIA	
			<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>				<i>total</i>	<i>radio/TV</i>
1908	London	2 ¹⁷³	1,999	36	58,000	c.300,000	110	100	-
1912	Stockholm	2	2,490	57	22,000	327,288	102	500	-
1920	Antwerp	2	2,591	78	25,000	349,689	155	200	-
1924	Paris	6	2,956	136	60,000	612,010	126	no data	-
1928	Amsterdam	- ¹⁷⁴	2,724	290	31,600	665,599	109	614	-
1932	Los Angeles	-	1,281	127	105,000	1,247,580	117	706	no data
1936	Berlin	2	3,738	328	100,000	3,769,892	129	1,800	no data
1948	London	-	3,714	59	85,000	1,247,283	136	no data	no data
1952	Helsinki	7	4,407	618	70,000	1,376,512	149	no data	no data
1956	Melbourne	9	2,958	384	104,000	1,477,719 ¹⁷⁵	151	no data	no data
1960	Rome	6	4,738	610	90,000	1,436,091	150	1,442	296
1964	Tokyo	4	4,457	683	75,000	2,061,183	163	3,984	2,477
1968	Mexico City	4	4,750	781	83,700	3,792,344	172	4,377	no data
1972	Munich	4	6,065	1,058	77,000	3,307,135	195	8,000	4,700
1976	Montreal	3	4,781	1,247	70,000	3,187,173	198	8,500	no data
1980	Moscow	2	4,092	1,125	100,00	5,268,163	203	7,629	no data
1984	Los Angeles	0	5,230	1,567	92,516	5,017,524	221	8,200	4,200
1988	Seoul	2	6,279	2,186	69,841	3,305,944	237	15,740	10,360
1992	Barcelona	6	6,659	2,708	65,000	3,033,064	257	12,831	7,951
1996	Atlanta	6	7,060	3,684	85,000	8,384,290	271	17,000	11,000

¹⁷³ Berlin and Rome bid for the Games, which were awarded to the latter. After the eruption of Vesuvius in 1906, the Italian government asked for the Games to be relocated as it needed money for rebuilding in the disaster area.

¹⁷⁴ There was no bid process, as both Games were awarded well in advance.

¹⁷⁵ The equestrian events were held in Stockholm, which accounts for 136,236 of the total.

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